

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

July 12, 2012

The Honorable Rebecca Blank
Acting Secretary of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Dr. Blank,

We write in support of the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) request for a disaster declaration to address immediate subsistence needs in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta.




Chinook salmon returns to Alaska are weak statewide this season, and have been below average in many areas in recent years. The State of Alaska has been forced to put burdensome Salmon conservation measures in effect in commercial, sport, and subsistence fisheries from the Kenai to the Yukon. These measures include closures and gear restrictions in the subsistence fishery, which is the highest priority use of the salmon resource and second only to achieving escapement goals for sustainable management. Fishery restrictions are not limited to Chinook salmon, as chum salmon fisheries are being limited due to the probability of taking Chinook salmon incidentally.

Our primary concern is the impact of closures on communities dependent on subsistence, including the Alaska Native peoples who for generations have depended on fish to feed their families. People along the Kuskokwim and Yukon rivers have a limited weather window to dry and put up fish for the coming winter. That window is now closing, and many rural Alaska subsistence communities do not have an adequate supply of Chinook salmon. Subsistence restrictions, coupled with limited commercial Chinook and chum salmon fishing opportunities necessary to protect passing Chinook salmon, are expected to be devastating to the mixed cash-subsistence economies common throughout rural Alaska.

It is imperative that all appropriate federal resources be made available to affected communities and fisheries as quickly as possible. Therefore, we respectfully request that AFN's request be acted on as quickly as possible, consistent with all relevant rules, laws, and regulations.

Thank you for your attention to this request.

Sincerely,

		
Lisa Murkowski United States Senator	Mark Begich United States Senator	Don Young Congressman for All Alaska